

Panel Speech

APA Conference • Housing Element Panel • Sacramento • October 22, 2001

***• Cathy E. Creswell, Deputy Director,
Division of Housing Policy Development •***

Does housing element process present real opportunity to engage in meaningful housing policy deliberations?

1. Statutory Framework both encourages and requires it
 - a. Public participation requirements broader than rest of general plan requirements – “diligent effort”
 - b. Both practical and policy benefits

Practical: obtain critical information about housing needs, conditions, and resources in community

Policy: opportunity to create support and work toward consensus. Creates process to build coalitions and Creates constituency for implementation

2. Update process allows opportunity to build on interest in smart growth and move from rhetoric to action

- a. Housing element update process provides both practical and policy tool for smart growth:

Practical: provides tools to actually implement smart growth strategies. Provides framework for reviewing ordinance, identify outdated policies or codes that inhibit smart development.

Policy: Some of the initial and somewhat continuing resistance to smart growth from housing and business community stems from observation that smart growth focuses on limiting development to detriment of housing concerns. And that while there may be lots of talk about balancing competing needs, little in way of action supports the rhetoric.

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Using housing element process to implement smart growth strategies can be a way to address some of the fear of smart growth while ensure meaningful balance of addressing both housing needs and preservation of natural resources and create stronger support for meaningful implementation (help build trust and confidence). It can provide framework for considering tradeoffs.

- b. Housing element update process also allows context for viewing community within a region and framework for considering linkages outside community borders. This can happen within context of regional housing needs process (jobs/housing balance within bay area) or in housing element update process (developing policies to promote housing along transportation corridors)
3. Update Process allows communities to build new and strengthen emerging coalitions and constituencies.
- a. Like no other times in recent past have coalitions been forming across all spectrums of stakeholders. Now see environmentalist partnering with building community, business community joining with low-income advocacy groups.
 - b. Housing element update process can be tool to bring these groups together to establish important partnerships in developing policies and strategies to implement them.
 - c. Where coalitions don't yet exist, housing element can be tool to develop them. This is especially critical now with business community. Strong successful coalitions with business and industry exist in bay area and a few other parts of State. Use housing element process to engage business community – adequate housing in critical to support workforce and growing recognition that housing development is important economic stimulus to local and regional economies.

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4. Housing element process can also be tool to educate community about need for additional housing, benefits of adequate housing supply, dispel myths about who needs housing, develop community acceptance strategies and create framework for talking about trade-offs.

Again, developing meaningful implementation strategies for smart growth or sustainable communities means engaging the public in process to understand trade-offs. Addressing need to preserve open space may require building at higher densities. Use the housing element process to reduce fears about what those higher densities look like.

Communities might find effective allies with nonprofit housing developers who have become expert in developing community acceptance strategies. Example of NPH and community open house.

As to the question of whether communities seek compliance and side step serious deliberations..... Yes, not all but some. For example, we may see housing elements with significant # of housing programs---but these programs either don't relate to needs identified or community's ability to implement.

Our goal is to work with communities, recognizing their unique needs, conditions, and interests to help them develop housing elements that both address state requirements and local objectives.

Our objective is to create tool for meaningful action while recognizing a community's resources and limitations. The housing element can and should be a meaningful tool to build coalitions, educate the community and improve the quality of life for Californian's by effectively addressing growth and housing needs while preserving our precious natural and agricultural resources.

HCD is committed to working in partnership with local governments and other critical stakeholders to ensure that State housing element law can be an effective tool for building strong sustainable communities throughout California.

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